



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

February 3, 2005

News Release

FEDERAL JURY CONVICTS HUMAN SMUGGLER WHO DRAGGED MAN TO DEATH OVER \$300

HOUSTON- A federal jury convicted a Mexico citizen of aiding and abetting and transporting illegal aliens following a smuggling attempt that resulted in a Honduran being dragged to death.

Rafael Garcia-Flores, aka "Rafa Garcia-Flores," 37, faces a possible sentence of life in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

On July 6, Garcia-Flores smuggled Jimmy Jose Lopez-Mejia and other illegal aliens into the United States for a fee. When Lopez-Mejia's brother Jose Santos Lopez-Mejia arrived at the parking lot near I-45 North here, he got into (leaned into the open window of) Garcia-Flores' running vehicle to pay him. Garcia-Flores then attempted to raise the smuggling fee from \$1,500 to \$1,800 and the two began to argue.

According to court documents, Garcia-Flores brandished a pistol and the two began struggling over it, causing the gun to fire. Garcia-Flores then stepped on the vehicle's accelerator, dragging Jose Lopez-Mejia as he drove out of the parking lot and onto the freeway. The vehicle then crashed into a freeway retention wall.

Jose Santos Lopez-Mejia was transported to a local hospital where he was later pronounced dead.

ICE special agents responded to the incident with Houston police and arrested Jimmy Lopez-Mejia, Henry Reyes-Martinez and Leobel Benitez as part of the investigation. All three admitted they had entered the U.S. illegally near the Rio Grande Valley and gave information about the incident and Garcia-Flores' role to investigators.

Judge Sim Lake has scheduled sentencing for April 14. Garcia-Flores is presently in U.S. Marshals custody being held without bond.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.